

THE CART OF DEATH - By Kurt Kuechler

Translated from the German, with introductory comment,
by William L. McPherson.

The sketch which follows is from the pen of Kurt Kuechler, critic, dramatist and journalist, one of the most promising of the younger writers of North Germany. For some years he was on the staff of one of the leading North German newspapers, the "Hamburger Fremdenblatt." He is the author of several successful plays, one of which, "Der Sommer-spuk," was produced at the Irving Place Theatre, in this city, in October, 1912.

The story speaks for itself. It is notable for its simplicity of form and high imaginative power. With the use of the slightest material a real structure of tragedy is built up, and a very deep and human note is struck in a thoroughly original way. Bave as its outline is, the tale is rich in dramatic and poetic suggestion.

A CAPTAIN of the Hungarian Honved, who, at the head of his company, had charged audaciously after the retreating Russians, lay gravely wounded in a half-destroyed barracks on the road between Boryslav and Lubienko. With fixed bayonets his people had chased the Russians down the northern slopes of the Carpathians. Now they were already far beyond Boryslav and could see, perhaps, the towers of Stryj rising from the level Galician plain. But he himself lay there helpless, with a desperate wound in his breast—a part of the blood-stained aftermath of the battle. He was waiting for the wagon which was to carry him to Lubienko.

It was late afternoon. Through the frightful smoke cloud which hung like a pall over Boryslav there came now and then a ray of reddened sunlight. But even redder were the flames which for seconds at a time burst through the denseness of the smoke cover like a fiery breath from the jaws of hell. The fleeing Russians had set the torch to the hundred naphtha wells of Boryslav. The black, sooty columns, which rose heavily and silently to heaven, produced a twilight effect. The blaze which broke out of the well openings, clambered up the gigantic pump towers and shot out toward the edges of the vast overhanging canopy could do little or nothing to dissipate the gloom.

The captain saw nothing of these gigantic masses of soot and smoke. He lay only half-conscious on a pile of straw in a corner of the barracks. A dull pain burrowed in his shattered breast. His spirit was already travelling the darkened roads between life and death. His soul was in that half-way state in which joy and sorrow, the thirst for life and the fear of death, mingle in an indistinct and dreamy sense of exhaustion. When the driver lifted him and placed him in the straw of an old peasant cart he remained completely passive.

A young Honved lieutenant, who, with a blood-soaked bandage about his head, was already sitting in a corner of the cart, weakly lifted his hand in greeting. But the captain did not notice it.

The wheels creaked as the vehicle, with its sorrowful load, got into motion.

It was truly a wagon of death. A lean horse, with a black, scruffy coat, leaned wearily and with hanging head in the patched-up harness. The driver, an old, white-haired, crook-backed peasant from some village in Galicia, whose farmhouse the Russians had burned, sat on the front piece of the cart and held the reins loosely in his trembling hands. The old framework of the wagon

groaned, the wheels crunched dolorously in the sand of the road. It seemed as if the vehicle would fall to pieces at any moment. The straw and the sideboards both showed dried-out blood stains. How many dying men had this old cart brought to the hospital? How many dead men had it carried to their burying place?

Laboriously they moved along. It was as if the miserable horse felt the menace of the towering smoke mass rising over Boryslav like some gigantic, formless beast. He dragged himself along like a tormented creature, lamed in all his limbs, who has no hope of escaping a crushing, on-rushing evil.

The aged driver sat on the fore rail, dull and brooding. Behind him the wounded soldiers groaned softly.

Once, at a cross-roads, a sentinel held up the wagon.

He demanded the password.

"Prince Eugene," said the peasant with some difficulty.

"The counter password?"

"Kolomea."

"Pass on!"

The steed trotted ahead.

Night came. But darker than the night were the monstrous smoke clouds which blotted out the heaven over Boryslav.

The wagon rattled through a grove of birches. The wind sang softly in the leaves. It sounded sweet and summerlike, as if this birch wood knew nothing of the Russian terror which had swept, burning and plundering, over the Galician plain. Yet there were fresh graves under the waving, softly singing branches.

Suddenly a plaintive woman's voice came out of the darkness. A white hand was raised imploringly out of the shadow.

"Halt!"

The peasant pulled the reins and made a crackling noise with his tongue. The horse stopped short and dropped its head.

The woman's voice pleaded:

"In God's name, take me along! I can walk no further."

The peasant made a motion of consent with his head. Painfully the woman clambered into the wagon, crawled over the straw and leaned against the sideboard—close up to the young officer whose head was covered with a blood-soaked bandage.

The horse started to pull, and again the wheels sighed and groaned.

The rays of a searchlight felt their way through the darkness like the pale, naked arm of some mysterious phantom of the air. For a second the floor of the wagon was lighted up.

The lieutenant looked about and saw the face of the woman, still beautiful in spite of her distress and her haggardness. The black hair hung over her brow. In her big eyes there was an expression of fear and entreaty.

The rays of the searchlight shifted and all was dark again. The lieutenant let his head sink. The face of the woman had eluded him. He smiled sadly as if an alluring vision had been vouchsafed him and then recalled.

The woman, who had seen nothing, sat still in the wagon, absorbed in her own painful thoughts. She had drawn up her knees, and the pale, delicate hands were clasped about them.

The captain dreamed in his heavy sleep—the semi-coma which separates life from death. His breath came rattling out of his shattered breast. Three poor creatures—separated

from one another by the misery which each of them had to bear.

An hour passed—an uneasy and cheerless eternity.

The wagon rolled heavily over a wooden bridge. It sounded like distant thunder—like the thunder of a battle far behind the mountains.

The captain raised himself with an effort and thrust his head forward. There was a martial flash in his eyes. The woman drew back and crouched timidly against the sideboard of the cart.

Then the captain began to talk, confusedly, disconnectedly, as if tormented by fearful visions. Memories seemed to empty themselves out of his darkening soul. Once more pictures of the frightful Russian battles

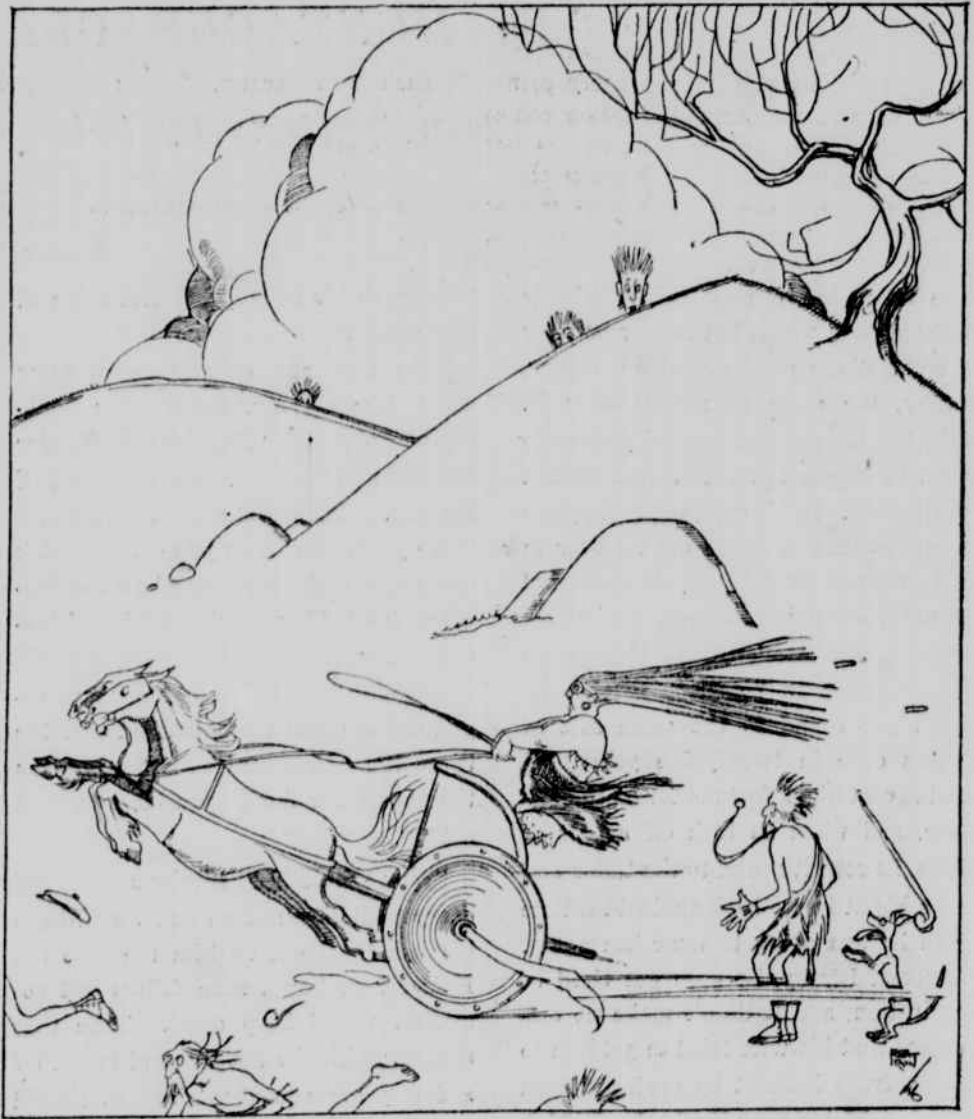
had become insensible to the horrors of the time.

The captain began to gasp for breath. He stretched out his arm; his eyes burned with fever and almost stood out of their sockets, as if they saw some terrible catastrophe being enacted. Then the words came again, escaping painfully from the shattered chest—warning, raging, threatening, as though they were trying to ward off an imminent disaster.

"Halt! Halt! You, down there! Don't rush the trench! Do you hear me? Don't go forward! Don't go forward! They are squatting there concealed. With machine guns. Now they fire. All dead, all. My lieutenant is dead. Lieutenant Hal!"

He didn't finish the name. His head sank forward. His body seemed to crumple up. A

THIS DAY IN HISTORY—By Rea Irvin



Queen Boadicea, the First Woman to Drive a Car. July 23, 313 B. C.

formed in his brain, and his trembling lips translated them into broken phrases.

"The Russians—the Russians—there in the pine wood—in the trench. Don't you see the trench, men? Don't you see them? Back, you fools—God in heaven—all gone, all lost!"

His voice died down to a whimper. The woman closed her eyes in fear and horror.

The lieutenant smiled in his sleep. His hands opened tenderly, as if they sought to clasp something soft and sweet. His lips trembled a little, as if they were whispering a name.

The old peasant on the seat board did not move his head. He had heard so often the phantasies of dying soldiers. His aged soul

last sigh came, and then a shudder ran through all his limbs.

With a half-suppressed cry the woman raised herself. She leaned over, with the upper half of her body toward the captain, grasped his laxly hanging arms, propped his chin and lifted the head, with its fixed and staring eyes. The woman cried:

"The name! Speak the name! It was not Lieutenant Haljos? Speak! God in heaven, only speak!"

But the lips of the captain remained dumb. Whimperingly the woman pleaded:

"It isn't so! It isn't so that it was Lieutenant Haljos? Not Lieutenant Haljos!"

ALBERT THE MALE - By Walter Lippmann

By Courtesy of "The New Republic."

IN COLLEGE Albert achieved the right club after many nights of worry and a rather strenuous campaign conducted by his mother. I saw something of Albert in those days when we were freshmen together, and he was always cordial when we were alone. In public he did not know me so well, and there were times in the month before his election when he did not know me at all. I did not mind, for I knew that election to the club meant all the difference between success and failure. Albert could have lost his degree and laughed about it with the feeling of a good loser, but the club he required to give meaning to his life. He "made" it, and was never

I have looked for him. I have not been able to find his regiment."

Softly weeping, she sank back and resumed her brooding attitude.

The lieutenant in the corner kept on smiling. Did he see always in his dream the beautiful, sad face of the woman which the ray of the searchlight had revealed?

All at once he began to sing.

None of the words could be understood. It was a song out of the twilight of the soul, melodious, though broken; it was a dreamy love song from the sunny plains of Hungary, sweet like the nightingale music of far-off violins.

The woman raised her head. Her soft weeping stopped. Slowly she groped toward the lieutenant. The straw rustled under her hands and knees. The wheels creaked under the cart. The hoofs of the horse beat monotonously on the road. In the distance the lights of Lubienko shone.

But she heard and saw none of those things. The soft tones played strangely with her soul. Wonderful images arose like a tender glow of sunrise out of the lost shadows of the night and a sweet hope blossomed in her mind. She lifted her face to the dreamer; her lips almost touched his trembling mouth. It was as if she wanted to drink the song from his lips. Slowly, tenderly, imploringly she said:

"Is it not so? It was not Lieutenant Haljos?"

But no answer came. The eyes of the dreaming man remained closed. Only the melody of the love song crossed his lips.

And the woman listened, spellbound by the sweetness of the song.

Shyly she laid her hands on his shoulders. They yielded under the gentle pressure. The eyes opened, the lips ceased to move. A wonderful light came out of the man's eyes. Then the lids sank and the body collapsed.

The woman remained quite motionless until the wagon stopped before the hospital door.

The driver bent over and saw that both the men were dead.

"I thought," he said indifferently, "that I should never get them to Lubienka alive. Get out, please, lady. We are there."

The woman looked at him with big, staring eyes. Then she nodded obediently and got out of the wagon. The light which came from the hospital illumined her face. It was altogether tranquil. The set features had a wonderful effect of beauty. A soft smile wreathed her delicate mouth.

The peasant noticed this, was startled, and stepped back reverently.

Calmly, without looking to either side, the woman walked away. She lived no longer in the fearful present. She lived only in the sweetness of the past.

afterward seen without the striped necktie which was its mark.

After graduation Albert entered his father's bank and was elected to the right club. From these two foci Albert gathers all the opinions he displays.

When everybody at the club cursed Roosevelt as a socialist, Albert cursed him. Now that everybody at the club admires Roosevelt, Albert is wondering whether to join the reinforced infantry division for service in Mexico.

He calls Haldane pro-German and suspects Mr. Asquith of coddling the German prisoners in England. I tell you this to indicate that the great war has not found Albert wanting in imagination. As he says, Civilization is at stake. The war has done much for Albert's opinions. When it began he spoke of democracy as the hope of the world, and cursed the docility of the German Socialists.

As the months dragged on he met a number of Englishmen and Frenchmen at his bank and his club. Albert felt a little out of it. He took to hating Josephus Daniels.

Soon a stream of expatriated Americans began to return, telling how America was despised in Europe. This worried Albert, and he began to talk of American honor.

At cotillon and bazaar and at the horse show he discussed the loss of American virility, the love of soft ease, the incorrigible pacifism of the American workman and farmer. He felt troubled about America. Then came Albert's trip to London and Paris. I fear that I cannot do it justice, for those two weeks mark Albert's crystallization as a leader of thought and action. In London Albert went out to dinner four times and to a week-end party, and this experience convinced him that America was a cheap place.

What America needs is universal service. Plattsburg for everybody most of the time is his ideal, and a complete philosophy of life it is. Prepare for war because war is God's purge for the degeneracy of peace. Prepare for peace because only the invincible nation can insure peace. Hard physical work, says Albert, will educate for citizenship, industry and morals. All perplexities have left Albert, not a very surprising thing, however, when you remember that he has never had many perplexities to trouble him.

This is Albert to-day, and with this equipment he faces the future. He is going to be very rich and his power is sure to be very great. He will be quoted in the newspapers. He will dine with editors and statesmen.

It is distressing to think that he and his kind will have the power to cause antagonism or friendship with other nations, and that his stubbornness and blindness may turn the coming revolution into a disaster. I have no great faith in Albert. I think it is the Alberts who ruled Europe and brought it to ruin. I think it is the Alberts of Eton and Oxford who have compelled England to muddle in blood, as it is the Alberts of Prussia who thought blood and iron were the instruments of destiny.

I know Albert for what he is, a charming, well-mannered, unconscious snob, who knows nothing of men outside his class, an uneducated, untrained and shut-in person who has been born to power by the accident of wealth. You see, I don't think with the socialists that Albert is a malevolent, intelligent conspirator with a hard heart. He is not malevolent, and he is not intelligent.

To Be Smart, a Magazine Cover Must Be Meaningless

Drawn by L. M. Glackens



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